



L.S.H.S. ARCHIVIST

~ NEWSLETTER OF LAKE SCUGOG HISTORICAL SOCIETY ~



LAKE SCUGOG
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

~
DEDICATED TO THE
HISTORY OF THE LAKE
SCUGOG AREA

~
• ESTABLISHED 1969 •

Lake Scugog Historical Society Board of Directors

2025-2027

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LSHS 175 Perry St. Port Perry,
Ont. L9L 1B8



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Message from the President

by Marilyn Pearce

TRADITION: a belief, custom or behaviour that is passed down from 1 generation to the next within a society. It acts as a bridge to the past, providing communities with a shared identity, a sense of belonging & cultural continuity.

As we enter these lazy, hazy days of summer, I think back to all the traditions in Scugog that I have enjoyed since arriving here in the 1980's. Traditions that brought the community together.

Remember the Church dinners especially the Scugog Island Church chicken BBQ and the Greenbank United Church Beef dinner and all those pies on the Friday night of the long weekend in August. Many of us remember Western Weekend which was replaced by Festival Days in the downtown and Palmer Park. Huge crowds attended the fun and activities and of course the concert/dance in the tent. Ball tournaments at the waterfront diamonds nearly every weekend, fishing derbies during the week, and boat races on the lake – boy were they noisy. All great summer traditions of the past.

Summer began with the Canada Day fireworks and ended with the Port Perry Fair – traditions that still last. Others that continue to bring us together like the Blackstock Truck & Tractor Pull which is 50 years old now and the Caesarea Regatta now celebrating its 96th year as well as the 159th Blackstock Fair also give us opportunities to get together not just for tourists but as community families celebrating our culture.

Family traditions like the "Family Picnic" were also annual traditions as getting together to catch up on family events around a large table of potluck food was always special. My family still gets together annually in July to visit and reminisce about growing up together and we've even added an "historical story" of our ancestors that our children and grandchildren enjoy provided we keep it short. They love to hear the stories of our adventures. How many still carry on this tradition?

As a Scugog family maybe we need more opportunities to get together during the summer to reinforce that sense of belonging and shared identity. Summer shouldn't be just about what we do to attract visitors and tourists although they are welcome to join us as we celebrate all we have in this community. I encourage everyone to put down the phones and gadgets and go and visit all your neighbours at the many events that are part of our cultural identity – we are small town, agricultural, lake oriented and sports-minded. We love our Arts & Theatre.

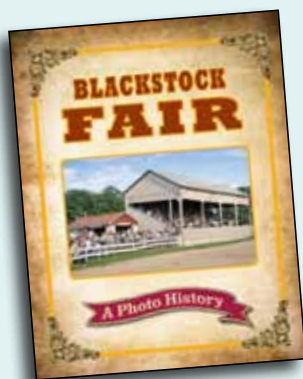
*Enjoy your summer and the many traditions
we value in Scugog.*

NEW BOOKS

Now available to read, or
download at the

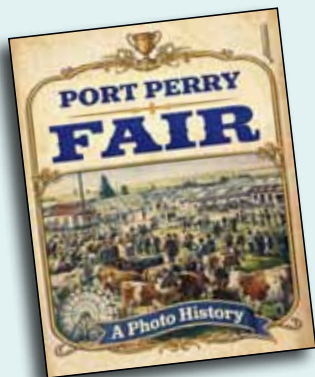
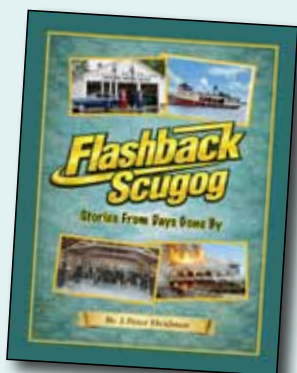
Scugog Heritage Gallery

<https://www.scugogheritage.com>



The Blackstock Fair book features more than 100 photographs of the fair from the mid-1950s to 2011.

Flashback Scugog features 50 stories illustrated with enhanced colour photographs of significant events in the Port Perry's history.



The Port Perry Fair book features more than 100 photographs of the fair from the mid-1950s to 2011.

These books and many more Scugog Township history books are available at Book's Galore, Port Perry or on Amazon.ca

UPCOMING EVENTS 2026



Tentative Schedule

Please Note: Some events, dates and locations could change.
Coming Events calendar will be updated in future newsletters.

**Note: All Speaker Series Meetings will be held in the Rotary Room - Scugog Memorial Library
Doors Open: 6:30 pm - Speaker at 7 p.m.**

- | | |
|----|---|
| 1 | August 18 - LSHS Executive Meeting
Scugog Library - 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. |
| 2 | August 29 - Blackstock Fair Exhibit
Blackstock - 10-4:00 p.m. |
| 3 | September 6-7 - Port Perry Fair Exhibit
10-5 p.m., at Port Perry Fairgrounds |
| 4 | September 8 - LSHS Executive Meeting
Scugog Library - 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. |
| 5 | September 15 - Speaker Series
John Boyko - "Life of Sanford Fleming"
Library Rotary Room - 6:30 - 8:45 p.m. |
| 6 | September 16 - LSHS Archival Committee
Scugog Library - 1:00 - 3:00 p.m. |
| 7 | September 20 - Cartwright Union Cemetery Walk & Talk - 4021 Edgerton Rd., Blackstock |
| 8 | October 4 - Cemetery Walk- Pine Grove *Pending |
| 9 | October 13 - LSHS Executive Meeting
Scugog Library - 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. |
| 10 | October 17-18 - Antique Show
Scugog Community Centre - 10 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. |
| 11 | October 21 - LSHS Archival Committee
Scugog Library - 1:00 - 3:00 p.m. |
| 12 | November 10 - LSHS Executive Meeting
Scugog Library - 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. |
| 13 | November 17 - Speaker Series
Robert Henderson - Adventures in the Himalayas
Library Rotary Room - 6:30 - 8:45 p.m. |
| 14 | November 18 - LSHS Archival Committee
Scugog Library - 1:00 - 3:00 p.m. |

Print & Save for future reference.



MINORS REVIEW

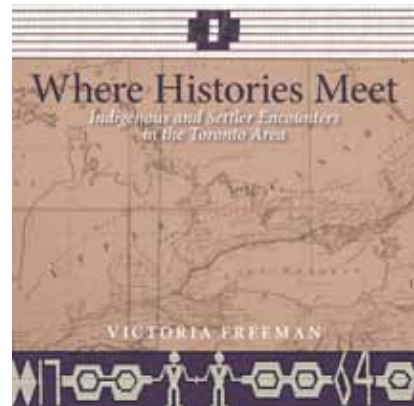
A Book Review by Bill Minors

WHERE HISTORIES MEET

*INDIGENOUS AND SETTLER ENCOUNTERS
IN THE TORONTO AREA*

BY VICTORIA FREEMAN

Published by University of Calgary Press \$45.00



This large 354 pp tome traces the histories of the Toronto region's Indigenous peoples and their relations with settlers from the colonial treaties of the 1780's to the Indian Act of 1876. Created in consultation with five local First Nations, this groundbreaking study brings archival records, oral memory, and the voices of Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers in respectful dialogue to understand the colonial dynamics that still structure Indigenous-Canadian relationships today.

There is an interesting section that explores the significance of the Toronto Carrying Place portage route and how treaties and changes to the land through agriculture, logging, milling and settlement impacted local Indigenous Nations. There are many maps and photographs which include showing a fur trade route between Port Perry and Newmarket, then down Yonge St to York (Toronto). There is an ad in the 1806 Upper Canada Gazette offering a BLACK WOMAN TO BE SOLD.

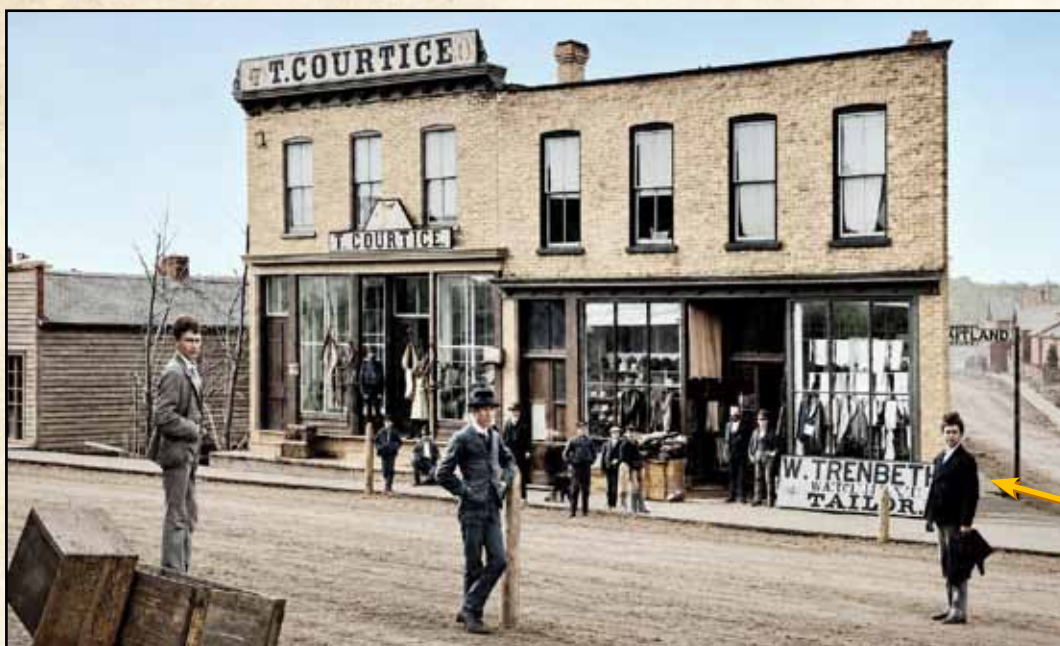
A highly recommended telling of the stories of individual people, their families, and their wider networks, revealing the interconnections between Indigenous peoples and settlers in the fur trade, missionization, and governance.

Created in consultation with the Mississaugas of Scugog First Nations, the Mississaugas of the Credit, Chippewas of Rama, Six Nations of the Grand River, Chippewas of Georgina Island.

Scugog Museum is ready for summer



Thanks to the 100 Men of Scugog, LSHS, Ontario "EASE GRANT" and Scugog township for the recently installed new ramps and improved paths.



The T. Courtice and W. Trenbeth stores at Queen and Perry St., circa 1880 with "mystery boy" standing at the corner.

PORT PERRY'S "MYSTERY BOY"

by Paul Arculus

The record of Scugog's history in photographs is an extensive one. The first photographs of the area begin to appear in the late 1860s. Henry McKenzie established the community's first photographic studio on Queen Street in Port Perry in 1867. He later formed a business partnership with a Mr. Scott. The partnership was dissolved in 1875 with McKenzie continued to ply his craft on his own until 1886.

McKenzie's subjects included local residents as well as a record of some of the buildings in the community. The community's most noted photographer was James Leonard who, in 1873, set up his practice in his studio behind what is now The Piano Café. When he died in 1884, his son William continued the business until 1900. The Leonards earned a province wide reputation for their family and individual portraits.

We can find evidence of several other photographers during this period but none stayed in business more than two years.

In more than a quarter of a century of researching and writing about Scugog and Port Perry, I have examined well over a thousand photographs of Scugog people and buildings. Recently, we were studying photographs of the downtown businesses taken at the time of the first scheduled running of the railway from Whitby to Port Perry in 1872. We discovered an interesting phenomenon. One young man, possibly in his late teens, stands prominently in the foreground of many of the photos.

1. **Who is the young man standing in the photographs?**
2. **Why is he featured in so many photographs?**

In all the images, the young man is wearing a Scottish Glengarry bonnet. He is the only man to be seen wearing such a hat in all the contemporary Port Perry photographs we have seen. Is this indicative of a Scottish heritage? He appears to be carrying a jacket or a cloth in his left hand, in the photo second from top.

Could this mean that the boy was related to the photographer or assisting him?

We have no idea who the photographer was that took the pictures – so we leave it up to readers of this story to come up with answers!

Is there anyone who has a photo album showing a family member who was in his late teens in 1872-1876 and resembles our mysterious young man?



HERITAGE FAIR

Organized & Sponsored by the Lake Scugog Historical Society & Scugog Library

EXPLORING OUR OWN BACKYARDS



Ray, Paul & Karen with a display of information the Port Perry Agricultural Society.

On April 11, the LSHS hosted our First Heritage Fair at the Scugog Library with more than 200 visitors, 11 organizations and 38 volunteers taking part.

The afternoon event was an opportunity to meet with the various heritage organizations and museums that operate in North Durham area. Each organization also added a brief "historic moment" outlining what they do and the events they have planned for 2026.

The purpose of the day was to encourage everyone to visit and support the significant heritage sites of North Durham.

As the summer season approaches we hope you will plan a visit to the sites in our own backyard.



Jasmine Stein and Allan Honey of the Scugog Heritage Committee with Heritage information.



Jury Lands Foundation of Clarington with their display by hosts Tracey and Marilyn.



Neil and Brenda representing the British Home Children Registry at the Heritage Fair.



Cannington Historical Society with Ted Foster.



Volunteers provided guests with information about the Lucy Maud Montgomery display from Leaskdale, Uxbridge Twp.



Dianne & Darcy were happy to display books and info. for the Manvers Twp. Historical Society.



Kate and Roberta at the display of history for Sunderland Historical Society



Steve and Dan of the Port Perry Grain Elevator Committee.

Around the Archives

By
Marilyn Pearce



Over the past few years the LSHS Board of Directors has been actively engaged in cataloguing all the items they have found in not only their archives but also in the many items being donated to us as we develop our historical collection.

In the fall of 2025 a new "archival" committee was formed to assist in identifying the many photographs and their historical context but also acting as a research team that assists with the many genealogical and property questions we receive as well as initiating new research of stories we have limited information about such as the British Home Children that called Scugog home.

LSHS has now catalogued over 780 items of interest that future generations will be able use for historical reference. In the catalogue are Bills of Sale of early merchants, photos and documents of local organizations, Fair histories, sports teams, churches, cemeteries, artifacts such as posters, church plates, souvenirs of the area, family histories, calendars, postcards, crocks and bottles of stores and factories, maps, and more. Anything that can authenticate our history is actively pursued even if it is in a private collection.

Recently it came to light how few physical artifacts we have about the railway history of Scugog even though we had both the GTR (CNR) line from Port Whitby, to Port Perry and then north to Lindsay and the CPR line that ran through Nestleton to Bobcaygeon.

Over the past few months local historians Paul Arculus, with some help from Peter Hvidsten, has created a very unique Diorama

of the Port Perry Waterfront around 1895. Using the old photographs Paul has built physical replicas of the buildings, mills and stations that were once part of our community. This visual representation will be featured in the windows of the grain elevator this summer for all to see.

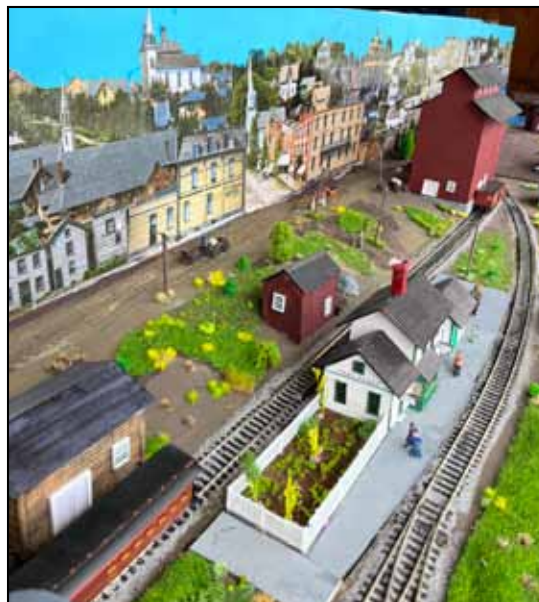
The diorama is about 10 ft long. As well there will be a new feature on the wall that if you click your phone on the QR code a "stationmaster" will tell the story of the Railway. That feature is set to open in July and special thanks to Durham & Scugog Tourism as well as Central Counties Tourism for supporting our efforts to make our "Railway Roots" story come to life.

Railways in most North Durham communities were the economic engines that defined today's main streets. We don't have an engine in our park like Lindsay, we don't have a caboose and station at our museum like Cannington, we don't have a model railway exhibit like Beaverton museum so featuring our railway history there are few physical reminders except for the Old Mill.

Using archival photo resources to establish this significant aspect of Scugog's history, we can now display this important part of Scugog history at one of the last reminders of this era. This has been a major project over the last few months and our thanks go out to Paul for bringing the railway back to the waterfront.

You can also visit the Scugog Museum that features models of the railway engine and steamboats.

Jump Aboard and have fun this summer exploring our North Durham Railway Roots.



Paul's diorama looking north along Water St

British Home Children. ADA'S STORY



Photo of Ada, when she was entering the Barnardo Home for children about 1907.

By Gary Manns

Ada Anna Field was born on October 20, 1896 in the village of Brightwell, Berkshire, England. She was the daughter of George Field and Sarah Ann May. She had two older brothers, George and Harry as well as two younger sisters, Ellen and Mabel.

At the time of her mother's death in 1907, the parents had separated. The girls who had been living with their mother were left with no place to live so were admitted to the Barnardo Children's agency.

Ada at 10 years of age and Ellen, 9 left England on September 12, 1907 aboard the SS Dominion arriving in Quebec 10 days later. They then travelled to Peterborough, spending time at the Hazelbrae residence waiting for their placement.

Ellen had several placements, among them were the J.M. Ploughman and the John F. Gerrow families on Scugog Island. Mabel due to her young age did not arrive until 1909 and was placed with John and Julia Sweetman, also on Scugog Island. Mabel would later marry Carl Graham.



Ada with her baby at her homestead.



Gordon & Ada's wedding picture.

After an unsatisfactory first placement, Ada was placed at the home of Oliver and Alma Williams on Scugog Island.

She attended the Foot school and continued to live with the Williams family until she married Gordon Hope on December 13, 1916.

Gordon, the son of long time Island residents William and Mary Hope, had moved to Saskatchewan in 1910 and had been granted a quarter section homestead through the Western Land Grants program. Located 400 km west of Regina near the town of Kindersley, the homestead was 12 km from the nearest grocery store and 20 km from the nearest doctor.

Travelling by train Gordon and Ada left Ontario shortly after Christmas 1916 for Saskatchewan. They resided on Gordon's homestead for the next 20 years and during this time they had 10 children.

Drought conditions in 1937 forced the family to relocate back to Ontario occupying farms on Scugog Island at the corner of Chandler Rd. and Mississauga Trail, and later on the 9th concession of Reach west of highway 12. After their retirement from farming in 1956 they moved to Sandy Hook, north of Uxbridge.

Gordon passed away on February 20 1969; Ada passed away on October 27, 1972. They are buried together in Prince Albert Pine Grove Cemetery.



The Bill & Claudette Brock Award, is presented to a group, business or individual for their outstanding contribution to the preservation of the heritage of the Township of Scugog.

This year the award went to the Mississaugas of Scugog Island for the many years of presenting the Pow Wow on Scugog Island. Justice Colwell, a director of the LSHS accepted the award on behalf of the Mississaugas from Claudette Brock.



Eric Conroy entertained about 60 people at the May 19, 2026 speaker's series meeting. He is the author of "Saving Keewatin", a C.P.R. steamship launched in 1907, and plied the Great Lakes. He is seen here with LSHS member Bill Minors.



Brock Family "Honourary Life Business Membership"

Lake Scugog Historical Society honoured members of the Brock family for their many years of outstanding support to the LSHS and Scugog Historical Museum. President Marilyn Pearce presented the "Honourary Life Membership to Claudette Brock, and her daughters, Julie, left, and Marina at a recent meeting of the LSHS.

Main result was Labouring Children



The Scugog Memorial Library Rotary Room was packed on Tuesday, June 16 for the LSHS Speaker Series event.

Guest speaker Joan Knighton, provided a very informative talk about the history of the British Home Children, also known as Barnardo's Children.

More than 100 people crowded into the Rotary Room, many of whose relatives were among the more than 100,000 children who were shipped to Canada from Britain between 1869 and 1932.

Following her informative talk, Joan answered questions from the audience whose grandparents were among thousands who worked on farms and homes throughout the district.



Dr. Vi Tu Bahn, author of his book "12 Elephants & A Dragon" was the guest speaker of April 21, 2026. He is seen here with his wife.

Remembering JOHN ADAMS

by J. Peter Hvidsten

Among the early pioneers who helped shape the history of Scugog Island, few were as influential as John Adams of Ambleside who played an important role in the development of both Scugog Island and the Port Perry area during the late nineteenth century.

Mr. Adams purchased Ambleside, a 300-acre farm on the western shore of Scugog Island about 1872. Overlooking Lake Scugog and within view of Port Perry, the property became one of the finest farms in the township.

The Adams farm was recognized for its high standard of cultivation and for the breeding of thoroughbred and grade livestock. He became one of Canada's leading breeders of heavy horses, cattle, and swine, earning a reputation that attracted breeders from across Ontario, other parts of Canada, and the United States. His commitment to quality livestock and improved farming practices made him a respected figure within agricultural circles.

His influence reached well beyond his own farm. John Adams took an active interest in promoting agriculture throughout Ontario, serving as vice-president and one of the chief promoters of the Ontario Central Live Stock Association. Through this work, he encouraged the advancement of farming and livestock breeding at a time when agriculture was central to the province's growth.

Ambleside also became a well-known gathering place for the community. The beautiful grounds hosted Church of England anniversary picnics and excursions, welcoming visitors who came to enjoy the farm's setting on Scugog Island. In 1894, the annual Reach, Port Perry, and Scugog Plowing Match was held at Ambleside, further reflecting the farm's importance to the agricultural life of the district. Throughout his life, John Adams remained a faithful supporter of the Church of England.

John Adams passed away at Ambleside on May 1, 1902, in his sixty-eighth year, leaving his wife, Margaret (Milne), and their son and daughter. His legacy is found not only in the success of Ambleside but also in the lasting contribution he made to the agricultural development of Scugog Island and the Port Perry community.

Through his business success, as a businessman, farmer, livestock breeder, community supporter, John Adams earned a respected place among the pioneers whose efforts helped establish the character and prosperity of the region.

John's Ambleside home today as remains as a reminder of his contribution to the development of Scugog Island and the Port Perry community.



John Adams home called "Ambleside" 1885



John Adams "Ambleside" home in 2001.

The Devitt Settlement

By Marilyn Pearce

Back in May of this year, I was invited to the Annual General Meeting of the Devitt's Cemetery Board of Cartwright, a volunteer board who manage a small cemetery on Lot 19, Concession 3 now known as 4340 Devitt's Road.

Having visited this well-maintained cemetery many times and noting who was buried there, I thought what a great chance to hopefully meet some of the descendants of one of Cartwright's earliest pioneer families – and that I did!



The Devitt's School, 1932.

Who were the Devitt's?

An article found in a 1934 edition of the Bowmanville Statesman states that John Devitt Sr. came from Ireland in 1827 and to Cartwright in 1839. John and his wife Ann and their six oldest children arrived first in the Bay of Quinte area but soon moved to Simcoe County where they lived for about 11 years and where another four children were born.

They first appear on the Cartwright census records in 1840 on Lot 20 Conc. 2, and had purchased land from James McGill Strachan who was the oldest son of Bishop Strachan of Toronto, and a former military man in the Rebellion of 1837-38.

By 1841, John had purchased 500 acres in this area, his oldest son Matthew had purchased 200 acres and his other son Wright had purchased 100 acres so all-in-all the Devitt family owned a block of over 800 acres. Thus the name Devitt Settlement described the area and the intersection of East Quarter Line and Concession 2 became known to many as Devitt's Corners.

Devitt's Corners

Jane Hall, wife of George Hall who was considered the first permanent settler helped to found the first school S.S. #3 (Lot 19, Conc. 4) as her children lived nearby. By 1852 there were 48 children attending here so the original log cabin was replaced with a frame building.

In the Belden Atlas of 1878 the area of Devitt's Corners now had a School on the north east corner of John Devitt's farm but it was moved across the road in 1929.

The hamlet also had a Methodist Church, built in 1860, on the north east corner of the area referred to as Devitt's Burying Ground with its first burial in 1867; the Loyal Orange Lodge #43, the first of two orange Lodges built here. Matthew, the oldest son donated the land for the cemetery in 1858 and also the land for the LOL.

Tragically Matthew died in 1860 when he fell

from a hay wagon hauling timber for the construction of the church. He left behind his wife Rachel Girvin and 10 children.

Church services were first held in the school that was on Devitt's farm. The Church at the Cemetery site burned down around 1900 after a Revival meeting. At the cemetery there is a memorial stone to the 10 men who gave \$10 each towards building the church. The names on the stone are - Devitt, Harris, Brown, Lawson, Bruce, Mason, Hooper, Venning, Carscadden and McKee.

The LOL #43 was the fourth of the many lodges built in Cartwright and after the first lodge at this location was lost to fire a second one was built just across the road. It closed in 1976 but not before having served as a place of many weddings, funerals, dances and community events. When the Lodge closed the members transferred to LOL #399 in Purple Hill – that lodge still exists today.

The Devitt family went on to become very involved in the political life of Cartwright with John Henry Devitt being a Councillor in 1882-90 and an MPP in the legislature of Ontario from 1905-1919. Also Creighton Devitt, Andrew Devitt and Laverne Devitt served on Council in Cartwright.

As my visit to this Board meeting concluded, I had a chance to speak with some of the Devitt descendants in attendance and came to realize how many of the early pioneers of this part of Scugog are also related to this very large family from the mid 1800s. The family was devoted to church, school, and lodge but also to the much larger community they called home.

These descendants continue to volunteer and ensure the cemetery respects the generations who settled here.



Devitt's School students, back left: Gerald Stinson, Carl Devitt, Zetta McKee, Flora Henderson, Bessie Fee, Annie Ashton. Front left: Lew Stinson, Helen Devitt, Nora Ginn, Margaret Thompson, Lida Ginn, Charlie Fee, Orville McKee, Roy Ashton, Eldon Fee, Eldon Thompson."

Photo by E. Samells



Newsworthy events in 1974/75 included the introduction of Regional government with the formation of Scugog Township, the widening of Lilla (Simcoe) St, the revitalizing of the Old Town Hall, the relocation of the Yacht Club, the campaign for artificial ice at the Blackstock arena and the proposed new arena in Port Perry.

Hard to believe that 50 years ago the arena on Reach St welcomed its first skaters and hockey players. A place that now has been shared by generations of athletes, families and fans.

In November 1974, the Council of the newly formed Scugog Township approved a motion to erect a single pad arena allowing a new arena committee to proceed with recommendations for fundraising, location and structure type for the building. This new arena would replace the aging "old barn" located on Water St.

It was determined in the planning that the new arena would need enough land to accommodate a future second pad and a swimming pool with ample parking for the growing township. After only six weeks, the arena committee was prepared to provide their recommendations for location, structure and fundraising to Council. In March 1975, Council approved the proposal to construct the single pad arena on Reach St at a budgeted cost of \$750,000. Costs to be covered from a number of sources including community organizations, corporate donations, community grants and property taxes.

Plans for the new arena included seating for 1000, a total

of six dressing rooms; each with a washroom and two with a shower, a heated viewing area and maintenance rooms large enough to accommodate a future second ice pad.

In the months following Council approval, the Ratepayer's Association raised concerns about the cost and financing of the construction of a new arena. In May 1975, our own Paul Arculus joined the New Arena

Committee as a representative of the Ratepayer's Assoc.

A robust fundraising campaign that included skate a thons, dances, penny carnivals, roast beef dinners, concerts, sporting events, door to door canvassing by volunteers and even dunk tanks were all part of the community engagement in the fundraising efforts for the new arena.

The contract was signed with Construction and Design Services of Whitby in March 1976 with an expected cost slightly less than the estimated \$750,000. Construction took place over the warmer months of 1976 and the rink at the Scugog Community Memorial Arena was ready for the public November 1.

I have been told that the first unofficial skaters on the new rink were the daughters of two friends of Don Thompson, Arena Manager. Don allowed the two girls, Barbie Doupe and Donna Page the opportunity to take a few spins around the new ice surface before it was open to the public.

Figure skaters and hockey players started their 1976 season on the new ice pad. The official opening of the arena was held on the weekend of January 14, 1977 with free skating, a skate-a-thon and a Jr. C hockey game.

By Leanne Ashbridge

Two special anniversary events are planned for September 19, 2026 to celebrate the legacy of this community hub.

Free Open House

1:00 - 4:00 p.m.

All ages welcome.

Refreshments will be available.

A special exhibit will celebrate the history of the building allowing visitors to refresh their memories of the special times, share stories and highlight the users of the Scugog Recreation Centre.

Anniversary Dance

for ages 19+ with DJ

and cash bar from 7-midnight.

Tickets are available now at a cost of \$20 each or bring a friend and get 2 tickets for \$30.

Anniversary merchandise is also available for purchase.

For more information or to purchase tickets or merchandise check out www.scugog.ca/50.

SCUGOG MARSHLANDS



This aerial view of the Scugog Game Preserve, located just south of the Port Perry causeway, and a section of the marshlands where the Osler family constructed their private clubhouse. The canals, created during the 1920s, can be seen cutting through the marsh.

How 20 miles of canals were cut through the marshlands of the Osler property

by
J. Peter
Hvidsten



The lands south of the Port Perry causeway, which are often referred to as the Scugog Marsh, have long been a mystery to most people living in the Lake Scugog area. During the early part of the last century, this vast property was predominately swamp and marsh, and had a good stand of trees to the south.



HENRY S. OSLER

In 1883, a syndicate of Toronto men, purchased the property with plans to turn the Scugog Marsh into a private hunting and fishing retreat for family and friends. To this day, the marshlands are still owned by family members of Henry S. Osler, one of the original members of what became known as Scugog Game Preserve Co.

Locally, most residents who are familiar with the property refer to this large tract of land and submerged marsh, simply as "The Syndicate".

One of the most remarkable projects undertaken throughout the marshlands was the creation of more than 20 miles of canals through the wetland, making many areas of the marsh accessible for the first time in its existence.

THE CHANNELS

The dredging of channels got underway in 1927, by O.F. Cummins & Wm. H. Robinson from Toronto. The dredging company began digging the canals through the marsh with a specially constructed steam dredging machine, mounted on a large wooden barge.

Continued next page

A contract between H.S. Osler and Cummins & Robinson, dated June 1927, stipulated that the contract was made pit for a minimum of five miles of channel, at \$2,000 per mile. Specifications for the channels called for them to be dug to a depth of 6' with a width at the surface of 20' and the width at the bottom to be 8 feet.

Following the contract being signed, the company was instructed by Osler to proceed immediately with the shipment of the dredge and were given orders to commence the actual dredging no later than August 1, 1927.

The dredging took place over four summers, with an estimated 20 miles of channels being created over the length of the contract:

Following are the total footages:

1927 dredging - 19,260 feet

1928 dredging - 34,469 feet

1929 dredging - 15,040 feet

1930 dredging - 27,207 feet

Total dredging - 95,985 feet

It took four years to complete the estimated 20 miles of channels, at a contracted price of \$2,000 per mile. Almost all of the channels were excavated from September 1927 to November 1930, with expensive dredging equipment brought in from the United States.

Based on \$2,000 per mile, the cost of dredging the channels in the Osler's Game Preserve is estimated to have cost the syndicate owners more than \$36,000.



There are no pictures of the actual dredger that carved out the channels in the Scugog Game Preserve, but this photograph of a dredger from the 1920s, provides a concept of the type of machines that may have been used to create 20 miles of canals.



Jamie Ross clears the mud and debris off the barge deck in 2001, and found the planks still in good condition and retained their green colour. The skeletal frame of the old barge lies rotting to this day in the lake.

When the dredging was completed, the crane and heavy machinery was removed and the stripped-down, the large wooden barge was pulled into an isolated area in the lake, north of the Cartwright Causeway and left there to rot.

For more than 95 years, the deck of the old dredging barge lay hidden from view under the surface of the lake. That was until a dry spell in 2001 when the large hulk, which had laid undisturbed in Lake Scugog for so many years, was exposed.

Scugog Island resident Jamie Ross came across the skeletal remains of the old barge, mired in mud on the north side of the Cartwright causeway and invited me out to photograph and record its size. The barge had a large platform, measuring 40' x 14' in size, with its main beams extending the full length of the structure, each measuring 14" x 2.5" in thickness.

Remarkably, the 12" x 2.5" planks which make up the deck were still solid after all that time, and the moss green stain which was applied more than eight decades earlier, looked almost like new

Today, what remains of the barge lies just inches under the surface in its watery grave, as it has since 1930.

NOTE: *Some of the photos on this page have been colourized from the original, old black and white photographs.*



by Sarah Parry

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Your Membership is our Future!

LSHS continues to grow, and at our May AGM we announced 167 paid memberships for 2025. As we enter our 57th year, our current membership stands at 153, including 34 life members, 58 individual members, 26 family memberships (53 people), and eight business partners. We warmly welcome new members Lynne Foster, Nancy Dempsey, James Holland, Wendy Bentley, and new life member Thomas Little.

Unfortunately, 33 members from 2025 have not yet renewed. We'd love to have you back as we work toward our 2026 goal of 175 members.

To help us better serve our members, LSHS plans to conduct a membership survey in Fall 2026. Building on our 2022 survey, we'll ask about communication preferences, event participation, research resources, desired membership benefits, and newsletter topics. Your feedback will help shape our future as membership support remains essential to sustaining our programs and managing rising operating costs.

For membership questions, please contact Sarah Parry, Membership Secretary.

- Have questions about your membership?
- Not sure if you need to renew?

Please reach out to Sarah Parry, Membership Secretary, at membershipshs@gmail.com.

You can also find more details about membership types, benefits, and renewal options on our website: <https://lakescugoghistoricalsociety.com/about/become-a-member/>

DON'T WAIT!

Renew today and stay part of Scugog Township's living history!



Membership Form

LAKE SCUGOG HISTORICAL SOCIETY EST. 1969

c/o 175 Perry Street, Port Perry, Ontario L9L 1B8
Website: <https://lakescugoghistoricalsociety.com>

President - Marilyn Pearce Secretary - Bill Minors Treasurer - Janis Carter

Name : _____

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Date : _____

Type Of Membership

*Choose your type of membership

INDIVIDUAL - \$15.00 ☐ FAMILY - \$25.00 ☐ LIFE MEMBERSHIP ☐

BUSINESS/CORPORATE - \$50.00 ☐ \$300 (tax receipt)

E-TRANSFER: lakescugoghistoricalsociety@gmail.com

To pay by cheque make payable to Lake Scugog Historical Society

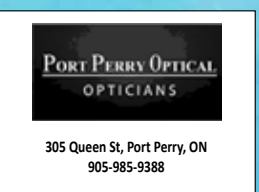
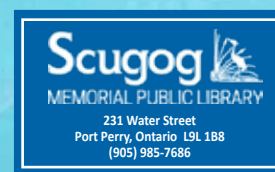
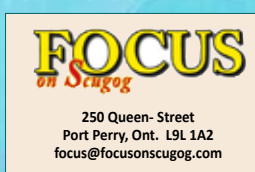
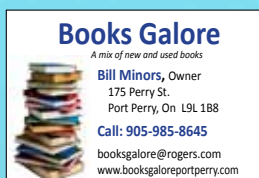
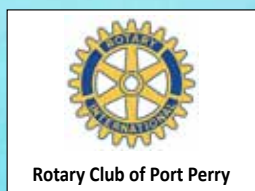
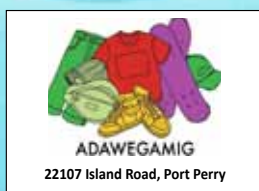
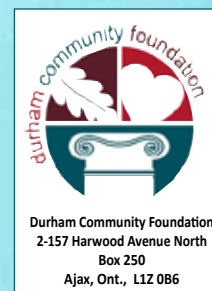
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Your contributions today help to preserve and protect Scugog's Heritage for future generations.